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compactor wheel comprising:

- a hub mountable to an axle of a compaction machine;
- a rim mounted around the outer circumference of said hub, said rim having a face and an inner circumferential edge and an outer circumferential edge;
- a plurality of compaction cleats circumferentially spaced on, transversely spaced across and mounted to said face of said rim; and
- an axle guard system comprising a cleat-free area formed circumferentially around said rim on said face and extending widthwise from said inner edge across said rim toward said outer edge, with said cleat-free area being wide enough that refuse is less likely to be directed toward the axle of the compaction machine.

Please add new claims 24 - 28, as follows:

24. (New) The compactor wheel as set forth in claim 21, where said cleat-free area is wide enough that cable, rope or wire refuse is less likely to be directed toward the axle and end up wrapped around the axle.

25. (New) A compaction machine comprising:
a body suitable for compacting refuse, said body having opposite sides;
an axle having two ends and mounting said body; and
a compactor wheel according to claim 24 mounted on at least one end of said axle.

26. (New) A method of making a compactor wheel for a compaction machine, said method comprising:
providing a rim having a face and an inner circumferential edge and an outer circumferential edge;
mounting a plurality of compaction cleats so as to be circumferentially spaced on and transversely spaced across the face of the rim; and
forming a cleat-free area circumferentially around the rim, on the face, that extends widthwise from said inner edge across the rim toward the outer edge so as to be wide enough that refuse is less likely to be directed toward the axle of the compaction machine.